

REMARKS

The Official Action dated November 16, 2004 has been received and its contents carefully noted. In view thereof, claims 1, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10 have been canceled, claims 2 and 3 have been amended and new claim 11 has been added in order to better define that which Applicants regard as the invention. Accordingly, claims 2, 3, 5, 7 and 11 are presently pending in the instant application.

Initially, Applicants wish to acknowledge the Examiner's indication on page 3 of the Office Action that claims 3-10 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In this regard, as can be seen from the foregoing amendments, previous dependent claim 3 has been amended to include all the limitations of independent claim 1 and consequently it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 3 clearly distinguishes over the prior art of record and is in proper condition for allowance. Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that dependent claims 2, 5, 7 and 11 are likewise now in proper condition for allowance.

With reference now to page 2 of the Office Action, claims 1 and 2 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,263,666 issued to Kubo et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed in that the patent to Kubo et al. neither discloses nor remotely suggests that which is presently set forth by Applicants' claimed invention.

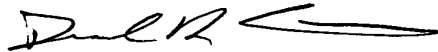
As noted hereinabove, independent claim 1 has been canceled in favor of dependent claim 3 which is now rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of previous independent claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that further discussion with respect to the merits of the rejection of claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Kubo et al. is no longer believed to be warranted. Furthermore, it is noted that

claim 2 has been amended to depend from now independent claim 3 and is likewise in proper condition for allowance.

Therefore, in view of the foregoing it is respectfully requested that the objection and rejection of record be reconsidered and withdrawn by the Examiner, that claims 2, 3, 5, 7 and 11 be allowed and that the application be passed to issue.

Should the Examiner believe a conference would be of benefit in expediting the prosecution of the instant application, he is hereby invited to telephone counsel to arrange such a conference.

Respectfully submitted,



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